1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

The phrase *nu-wak ghe-ru* is thus seen to mean "two canoes," and would appear to indicate the former existence on Vao of double canoes. Though double canoes are not now found anywhere in the New Hebrides, a sand-tracing of a double canoe called *rue-rue* has been recorded by Dr. Firth from Raga. Commenting on this, Dr. Haddon writes: "There can be no doubt that the memory of double canoes persists at Raga. It is not yet possible to say whether they were used there at no very distant date or whether the drawing [sand-tracing] is a traditional one handed down from a long time back when the ancestors of the present population (or at all events one element of them) sailed in such vessels. In the not very far distant Santa Cruz group, Quiros saw double canoes in 1606, and round about 1600 A.D. there appear to have been double canoes in the southern 'Polynesian' (or more correctly, perhaps, Micronesian) Islands of the Solomons, which were used by people who were said to have usually a white skin and 'red' hair. At that time there was a great deal of voyaging by the natives." [1] As we have already seen (p. 170), it was also about this date that the existing civilisation on Vao came about through the arrival of new immigrants. It would appear, therefore, not unlikely that these people had double canoes.

(2) *Nu-wak na mangean* or *nu-wak na vel-veluan*. The word *mang* (*ne-mang* in Atchin[2]) is used for the served pieces of split bamboo which are laced over the seams between the planks of large canoes to keep them water-tight (see Fig. 54). The phrase *nu-wak na mangean* thus means "plank-built canoe." The word *veluan* means "dance," possibly referring to the dancing which occurs during the inaugural rites connected with the canoe consecration, a consecration which does not occur in the case of coastal canoes.

The double canoe, if it existed, must have disappeared some time ago. The following descriptions all refer to the single outrigger canoes of which the small coastal type is still in use, and the large sea-going type continued to be manufactured and sailed till about 1900, when it was replaced by the modern European whaler.

CONSTRUCTION (BRIEF SUMMARY)

Detailed descriptions of construction, with plans and terminology, together with accounts of sailing technique and of individual voyages, will be given in a later volume on Atchin, where they were obtained. I will here confine myself to the briefest description of canoes on Vao, in order to make the main outlines of construction clear.

[1] A. C. Haddon, in Deacon, 5, p. 145. The sand-tracing in question was recorded both by Dr. Raymond Firth and by Miss M. Hardacre. For general account of sand-tracings, see present volume, Chapter XXV.

[2] See Layard, 1, p. 38.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

Small coastal canoes.

396 The hull is in all cases made of a single hollowed log, the dug-out. In the smallest coastal canoes there are no thwarts, the chief paddler sitting on the flattened stern and the rest on the three outrigger booms (*ne-wu*) where these cross the body of the dug-out.[1] There is a rail lashed along each gunwale, and it is to these two rails that the outrigger booms are themselves lashed. The booms are attached to the outrigger float (*na-sam*) by means of sticks driven diagonally into holes in the float in such a way that the sticks cross one another, and it is to these sticks that the booms are made fast by means of further lashings. All lashing is done with lengths of plaited coconut sinnet (*na-wun*). Made fast to the bow of every canoe is a prow-head carved to represent the highly stylised wings and beak of a bird. These prow-head figures are called *na-ho*, and their main peculiarity is that the cleft representing the space between the mandibles is continued down the gullet. Peculiarities in the carving of these figure-heads indicative of the wealth and importance of their owners are jealously guarded, and may only be copied on payment of a high fee in pigs.[2]

A good-sized specimen of such a canoe capable of carrying eight men and illustrated in Plate XIX was found by Speiser to be 9 metres long and ½ metre broad. The float was 5 metres long and 5 metres distant from the hull.[3]

Large coastal canoes.

The larger coastal canoes (such as that illustrated in Fig. 54) have their sides heightened by means of planks, or wash-strakes (*ne-rev*),[4] lashed on to each side of the hull through holes (*mete-mbô*) bored along the side of each plank, the holes then being plugged with coconut sheathing and the seam yet further protected by means of split bamboos, served with soft string, round which the lashing is made fast. The rear end of the planking is made flush with the stern, but in front a special bow-piece (*soron*) is added, in the form of a short piece of hollowed log, the after-end of which is cut flush with the foremost plank. In such a case, it is to this bow-piece that the bird figure-head is attached. Thwarts (*gheatat*) may be added at will, and along the whole forepart of the canoe

[1] I know of no seat consisting of "small boards almost on the bottom of the hull" such as is referred to by Speiser, 3, p. 251, quoted by Haddon, 3, vol. II, p. 26.

[2] Two examples are illustrated by Speiser, 3, Plate 64, Figs. 1 and 2. For actual specimens from the neighbouring island of Atchin see Layard, 1, Nos. 136 c and 137. Mr. Tom Harrisson tells me that these figure-heads represent either the frigate-bird or the shearwater (see Appendix II).

[3] For further measurements see Speiser, 3, pp. 250-1.

[4] Compare Mota *irav*, "board, slab of wood, in canoe, and house" (Codrington, 2).

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
OO12 Malekula OO12

396 a kind of bow platform is constructed of flat boards set at intervals and held on by means of a rail.[1]

Sea-going canoes.

In the sea-going canoes all these features are retained and there may be a second row of planks, or upper wash-strakes, called *romb-romb*. Structural forms by which sea-going canoes differ entirely from all types of coastal canoes, however large, are:

(*a*) The fact that sea-going canoes are symmetrically constructed with a bow-piece and figure-head at each end.
(*b*) The addition, at each end, of two subsidiary figure-heads (*mbambar*), one on each side of the main figure-head.
(*c*) The corresponding symmetry of the outrigger booms, all of which are placed close to one another amidships to allow of tacking in either direction.
(*d*) The fact that the free ends of the outrigger booms extend some distance beyond the hull on the side opposite to that of the float.
(*e*) The construction of wooden platforms (*hal avol*) on the outrigger booms on both sides of the hull.

Sails.

396 285 Coastal canoes (except the very smallest) and sea-going canoes were formerly all provided with sails, called *gha-mban* or *na-gha-mban*,[2] of which the literal meaning is "wing." In the case of the smaller coastal canoes the sail was made of leaf sheaths of coconut palm, sewn together with bast fibre. A photograph of such a sail taken by Speiser [3] is reproduced in Plate XIX. In the case of large sea-going canoes, however, for which a stronger material is needed, the sail was made formerly by sewing together long strips of plaited pandanus leaves dyed red with the same technique as is still used for the making of women's mat-skirts and men's girdles and penis-wrappers. The plaiting was done by the women, and the sail-strips were then sewn together by the men.[4] The sail, described 396 by Dr. Haddon as a simple kind of oceanic spritsail (of which the typical form was that formerly used in New Zealand),[5] was triangular with a

[1] These are the "small transverse boards like small seats" referred to by Speiser (3, p. 252, quoted by Haddon, 3, vol. II, p. 26) "which have no significance for navigation, but are merely the expression of the *suge* [misnomer for Maki] rank of the owner—the higher the rank the more the boards." They are, however, of practical use in that they may be used to support parcels of food or other paraphernalia of a voyage.

[2] Transcribed as *nagamban* in my original notes quoted by Haddon, 3, vol. II, p. 27. Compare Mota *gapan*.

[3] See also Speiser, 3, p. 251. These sails are no longer made. That seen in Plate I is a ready-made European one bought from a white trader.

[4] Codrington, 3, p. 292, describes a similar method of construction in Mota.

[5] Haddon, 3, vol. III, p. 11.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915)/1942
0012 Malekula 0012

free concave upper border, the other two sides being each lashed to a bamboo spar. There being no mast, the sail was held in place by means of a forked piece of wood inserted into the lower end of each spar in such a way that the fork attached to one spar rested on a specially constructed thwart amidships,[1] while that attached to the second spar rested on the stem of the first. Joined thus together at their base, the two spars projected upwards and outwards to support the free upper side of the sail, each upper angle so formed being referred to as the "tip of the wing."

Rigging.

The rigging consisted of six ropes plaited from the inner bark of a tree which in Atchin is called *wulu*, such ropes being more pliable and less liable to fray than the stronger coconut sinnet used for lashing the parts of the canoe. Of these six ropes, three were made fast about half-way up each spar. Functionally, these ropes may be divided into two classes. Two serve as stays, that attached to the windward spar being made fast to the outer longitudinal pole connecting the booms at the point of their attachment to the float, while that supporting the lee spar is made fast to notches on the ends of the booms projecting from beneath the lee platform. The remaining two ropes attached to each spar, making four in all, are made fast respectively to the fore and after thwarts.

Sailing.

The normal sailing direction of the canoe is with the outrigger on the starboard side, and in certain cases when there is only one figure-head, as in the coastal canoes, it is always placed on this side. Normally it is always necessary to keep the outrigger to windward, as otherwise the outrigger would become submerged and sailing would be impossible. In the case of a sea-going canoe, however, which has a prow at both ends, when sailing into the wind, instead of putting about, as is the case with any European craft, the direction of the canoe is reversed at the end of each tack, the sheets being loosened and the sail turned to the required position. This brings the outrigger on to the port side, and for the reason above mentioned, this tack being dangerous, it is never kept up for long, the canoe being brought back as soon as possible on to the starboard tack. For the same reason, this manœuvre is performed only in comparatively calm weather. In rough weather the outrigger is always kept to windward, part of the crew sitting or standing on the weather (outrigger side) platform or even further out along the booms in order to prevent it from being dragged out of the water owing to the pressure of the wind on the sail. In very high winds the sail can be reefed by rolling part of the sail on to the lee spar and making it fast there by loops let into the sail. The

[1] Haddon (ibid. p. 26), describing a specimen in the Basel Museum, says "on the edge of the canoe."

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

RITES ACCOMPANYING THE STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION

396 The following account is of the rites according to the usage of the village Pete-hul.

The first words of my informant on beginning his account was that the rites for a canoe were "just like those for Gong-Raising."

Trees of a size from which to make the dug-out hull are sometimes, though rarely, found upon the island. As a rule, these must be sought for on the mainland.

The standing tree is not burnt, as is the case with gongs, firstly because there is not the same necessity for drying out the sap, and secondly because this would entail a year's delay before the wood was fit to cut.

Proceedings open with a feast called *masses*, held in the dancing-ground. A fowl (called *masses*, and so presumably cooked in a pudding for this feast) is killed at the foot of the tree that is to be felled.

I have no record of a special communion rite on this occasion.

The stages of manufacture which I have recorded are as follows:

1. Preliminary removal of the bark. This is done in every case excepting when the tree is that called *nev*. The object possibly may be to kill the tree, thus taking the place of burning in the case of gongs.

2. The felling.
   Work done by men of the home-village (non-owning "line"?) only.

3. *Re golehi*. Stripping the bark after felling (if the tree is that called *nev*), and preliminary smoothing of the outside of the log.
   Work done by villages in rotation (*er tame nevu*).
   Pigs are killed on the site of operations, and these, with yams placed in a single heap, are given to the workers in reward (*tamoco*).

4. *Re ras na-wak*. Hollowing out the log.
   Work done by men of the home-village. Individuals from other villages may assist if they so wish, but there is no regular rotation.
   The women of the home-village have meanwhile been making puddings (*na-lough*). In the evening, when the workers have returned, these puddings are brought into the *ghamal*. The puddings are brought in and here divided into portions, one for each Quarter of the village, the members of each Quarter eating separately within the *ghamal*, while further portions are sent to those of other villages who assisted in the work.
   No pigs are killed.

li Layard E.[illegible] (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

396

5 and 6. *Por-pevean.*[1] The hollowed log is turned over and the ends, both fore and aft, are undercut.

Proceedings as for hollowing out the log.

No pigs are killed.

7. *Rev-revean.* Transporting the dug-out to the island.

Two days before the transportation the chief owner indemnifies the man on whose land the tree was felled by payment of a series of pigs of grades ranging up to that of a curved or even a re-entrant-tusker.

Men of all villages assist in dragging the dug-out to the shore.

Numerous pigs, but no tuskers, are killed; and these are placed on heaps of yams upon the shore, one heap for each village dancing-ground.

As in the making of gongs, the visitors now all depart, the actual ferrying-over to the island being the concern of the home-village only. This is no easy task, since the log as yet is only roughly hollowed out. If bow and stern are not too high it can, with skill, be paddled without outrigger; if, on the other hand, they are too high, a temporary outrigger is attached. Two men do the paddling, seated at either end. The rest escort them in canoes, and fill the air with songs of *na-rel* and the *Gong-Raising* song-and-dance cycle.

As the dug-out grounds upon the island shore, a small pig is sacrificed. This is called *ra sale ghowov te*, corresponding to the same rite performed for gongs to "purify them from contact with the sea."[2]

8. The dug-out is now left to dry.

9. *Kos-kosean.* The inside of the log, till now but roughly hollowed, now receives more careful trimming.

This work is done by men of the home-village at their leisure, taking many days.

No pigs are killed, nor special pudding eaten.

10. *Soron.* Meanwhile, others have been searching for a tree (or trees) for making the bow and stern pieces (*soron*), which, when made, are laid aside until the inside hollowing of the log is finished. These are then carefully fitted to the dug-out, but not yet made fast.

This preliminary fitting is the occasion of the only communion feast (*ghete-ghan*) recorded in connexion with the entire manufacture. Fowls killed in the morning are cooked in the puddings (*na-longk*) which in the evening form the medium for the rite.

[1] Compare Mota *pari*, "to cut with straight strokes in shaping the inside of a canoe" (Codrington, 2).

[2] See p. 352.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
OO12 Malekula OO12

396

11. *Ar wiriri ser-sor*. Attachment of bow and stern pieces. Holes are made, both in these pieces and in the dug-out, through which is passed the coconut sinnet (*na-wun*) by which they are attached.

For each stage in this and all the subsequent attachments two men are responsible for the provision both of the necessary sinnet and of the food with which the workers are rewarded. Each provides for one side of the canoe only, successive couples being made responsible for each stage in the work.

12. Attachment of lower wash-strakes. Bow and stern pieces being already in place, all is ready for the lower wash-strakes. Each of these wash-strakes is composed of four separate boards. These are:

Two *ne-rev homb-homb*, fore and aft, contiguous to the bow and stern pieces respectively.

Ne-rev tuluhak, contiguous to the after *ne-rev homb-homb*; it is to these that the outrigger booms will be attached, and

Ne-rev parav, contiguous to the forward *ne-rev homb-homb*.

13. *Wiwihean* (or *wiwihian*). Attaching the outrigger booms (*ne-wu*) and float (*ne-sam*).

Preparations have been made the previous day by sinking the half-built-up dug-out in the sand. This is called *ro tuwuni*, "we bury it." A trench is dug for it and sand piled up along the sides till the tops of the lower wash-strakes alone are visible. Without such extra support, the wash-strakes, made fast only on their under-edges, might get slightly out of line. It is interesting to note that the villages on the Inferior Side of Vao, having no good sand in which to bury the canoe, achieve the necessary rigidity by constructing instead a wooden scaffolding of piles (*rampiri*).

The exact placing of the booms is of the utmost moment, and in order that this shall be correctly done the services of an expert are required. This expert specialises in a kind of magic called *na-kur*,[1] and is himself called *mara kur*. In the evening, after the burying of the canoe, the booms are brought by men of the home-village and placed in rough position across the strakes called *tuluhak*. These men now retire, and the expert is left alone, for none may see him at his work. With special songs he puts the booms exactly where they should be tied. He alone knows the precise spacing necessary between each boom, and no one, as my informant wistfully remarked, "knows how he knows it."

Next day is that called *wiwiwihian*, when the booms are made fast and the float attached.

The work is done solely by the men of the home-village.

A pig is given by the chief owner to the expert.

[1] This is evidently the same word as *na-kur*, recorded by Godefroy for the name of a cult object placed in the model canoe used during the "mortuary rites" held for the "death" of a sea-going canoe that had been wrecked (see p. 471).

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

In the evening puddings with fowls cooked in them are divided in the dancing-ground between the four Quarters of the village, and a feast is held.

After this important day there is an interval while the remaining parts of the canoe are being manufactured. These are then assembled on two separate days, the work being done by men of the home-village only, without further ceremony or special feasts.

14. Those parts assembled on the first of these two days are the thwarts (*gheatal*), the upper wash-strakes (*romb-romb*) and the outrigger-platforms (*hal avol*).

15. Those assembled on the second day are the main figure-heads (*na-ho*) and the subsidiary figure-heads (*mbambar*).[1]

16. The canoe is lifted from the trench in which it had been sunk and now receives a final trimming, all remaining splinters being removed.

17. *Ra wohoi mete-mbò.* Plugging the holes (*mete-mbò*) with coconut sheathing.

Save for the sail, the canoe is now complete. Since trade in pigs is the chief object of these craft, the expert (*mara kur*) is once more summoned to ensure success. This time his function is performed in public, though doubtless there will be some secret song and prayer. In full view of all he brings a sow and places it inside the forward end of the canoe, then throws at it a small young coconut (*veragat*), so that the frightened animal runs aft. A second coconut is thrown, so that the sow again runs forward through the length of the canoe. This symbolises fertility in pigs and is an augury for success in trading.

18. *Ra hele ghamban nen.* Sewing up the strips of sail. Throughout the period of manufacture, the women have been busy in their houses plaiting the strips from which the sail is made. These strips are now sewn together by the men, adorned with love-herbs (*masing*) and their various insignia. When the work is finished, puddings (*na-longk*) are divided among the four Quarters of the village, and the men then hold a feast.

INAUGURATION DANCE

On the night following the assembly of the sail, parties from all the villages of Vao, as well as guests from Atchin and other islands and the mainland, assemble in the dancing-ground for an all-night dance (*veluan na ghamban*, "dance of the sail").[2]

[1] No mention is made here of fore and after platforms, though these exist.

[2] I have no record of the previous dancing of Vao villages in rotation, such as occurs on Atchin. This does not mean that this does not take place.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
OO12 Malekula OO12

Proceedings begin with the dance called *Le-tean*, and when this is over, payment of pigs is made to all those living who have previously made the sail of a sea-going canoe.[1] These pigs are presented by the chief owner placing them one by one upon his shoulder and calling on the receiver to come and take it. *Tunen* is then danced till dawn, when pigs are killed and placed on heaps of yams for each village represented. There is no *na-leng*.

The sail is then taken to the beach and placed on the canoe. This is then launched and the sail hoisted, and as they sail away the crew stand on the outrigger-platforms dancing and singing songs of the *Tunen* song-and-dance cycle.

CONSECRATION RITE (GODEFROY'S ACCOUNT)

The Inauguration dance, of which the above is a brief and incomplete account, is probably connected with the Consecration rite which Godefroy records:

"This rite has for its object the putting of a taboo on the canoe or whaler, that is to say, making them taboo to women. Once such a vessel is consecrated, no woman may touch it, far less embark on it. . . .

"In 1926, the four smaller clans of Vao—always associated together against the two larger—combined to buy a whaler 30 feet long; it cost them £200. As they received delivery of it about New Year's Day, they called it 'New-year,' which they pronounce *niouyet*.[2] For three months it lay at anchor off the beach belonging to Norohure, save for a few short journeys to the neighbouring islets and to the Canal du Segond.

"On account of the ravages of the sea-worms which live in those warm waters and bore through the keels of wooden boats, they hastened to construct a shelter for their beautiful whaler. They immediately made this shelter taboo, by sacrificing a pig in the dancing-ground. This shelter is one of the four existing on the shores of the island; I say 'exist,' for in fact there was only one left standing at the time the shelter in question was erected, the others had fallen in and rotted where they were, but the natives referred to them as if they still existed, on account of the sacrifices that had been made for them.

"As for the whaler, she received a grand consecration, similar to that of one of the great chiefs.[3] In her honour were sacrificed a dozen great tusked boars and a hundred cocks and hens, and two tons of yams were offered and placed, all decorated, on the great *kal-kal*.[4] . . . Then the natives danced all night till dawn, as is done in the great [Maki] rites.

[1] I.e. when the canoe is made and owned by the active "line" of Maki-men, to the members of the introducing "line."

[2] A typical example of French transliteration. The *t* is of course silent.

[3] The word "chief" is used throughout this account to mean "man of high Maki rank."

[4] Yam-table.